

Clothes for Children Grow Shorter; Silk a Favorite for Their Spring Frocks

Return to Vivid Colors Also
Expected to Please the
Juveniles.

By ANNE RITTENHOUSE.

THERE is some evidence that children's clothes have reached the irreducible minimum. The skirts of those youngsters who are girls, and the breeches of those youngsters who are boys aspire to end at the line of the hips.

This is nothing new to Paris. The fashion has prevailed there for several decades, but it has been accentuated during the last three years and is having its effect in America.

In this country women have con-

been the last to get up any affection for the kind of thing they have been compelled to wear.

Initiation is a great point in their career and they have envied the older members of the family their chance to wear dashing, colorful clothes that had real character. Now comes their opportunity. The midwinter is prolific of such desirable costumes. They fill the windows, they are seen in the parks, they abound in the nursery and schoolroom.

There is a strong indication in such clothes of a return to many of the things we once considered utterly unsuitable for youngsters; we got this idea during our sudden reform. When we adopted the French fashion of washable slips as a substitute for worsted frocks we were entirely convinced the reform was lasting. But is it? When plaited serge skirts are attached to sweaters of red wool and trimmed with blue Ankara we begin to think that no fashion is ever completely dead, for this

fashion for three years. The short skirt, the bobbed hair, the small sleeve, socks and sandals, long waisted bodices without waistline are only a few of the features bodily lifted from the nursery and schoolroom by many who should have known better.

The revolution in clothes for the elders, therefore, started from a juvenile source. If juveniles change their fashions will women follow suit?

Joy to the Children.

Possibly the return to vivid colors for children not expressed through the conventional wash fabrics but through the more unusual taffeta and crepe de chine will cause more joy to children than to their mothers, unless the terrors of the laundry bills have kept the latter from sleeping. Surely there will be drastic economy if wash fabrics cease to exist in the wardrobes of children!

Silk is a strong favorite for spring frocks for youngsters, and the man dressmaker who began the exploitation

for older women who go to the hot sands of the South. For them it is merely trimmed with a red ribbon that hangs to the knees from two buttonholes at the neck, and there is a belt of red kid or ribbon.

Children will wear the same fabric in a different way. It will form the overblouse to dark and unwashable skirts. Even where the straight line is retained in everyday frocks, there is an obvious effort to get away from simplicity. Well enough is not let alone. One conspicuous new frock of the season is of tan linen sufficiently short to demand trousers on even a modest child, and these tight little bloomers are of bright blue. The embroidery is in red and blue, somewhat resembling a flower pot at the hem. Nothing sedate about this.

As these trousers become more frequent one begins to wonder if the nursery will influence older women into a revival of pantaloons?

Red and Blue Trimming Preferred.

It is evident that the colors which attract most attention are used on white frocks as embroidery, as buttons, as cloth applications. White linen slips that were once left bare of trimming are now touched with rows of red buttons and all edges are finished with African triangles in red cloth. Only recently did the designers for adults take up these ancient forms, but they have been in use for juvenile clothes since the Egyptian era, one thinks.

The trick of lining hip sashes with bright colors will be brought into play this spring. Georgette is a good fabric to use. It is soft and does not add to the bulk of the tiny figure. That the Little Lord Fauntleroy sash will be reinstated seems reasonably certain, but it will be kept from boys and restricted to girls. Possibly the self-determination of small youngsters would prohibit the fashion if it were attempted.

Little boys, by the way, will have their hearts' delight offered to them in a new kind of tweed top coat which permits them to swagger as they wish. It is so very grown up. The fabric is tweed, the color is tan. It is modelled on those British warmers that made the trenches livable. There are huge pockets, a half tight belt with a buckle, notched revers, and glory of glories, a hat to match of the rainy day variety with a rakish brim that sheds water. How the possessor of such things will pray for that his once passionately hated—the long, long day when the sky drips. No attic, no schoolroom for him. The open sky and the broad highway.

HATS FOR THE GIRLS.

There is none so powerful in the mastery of fashion who can lay down the law about hats for a class. The young girl is supposed to wear the kind which expresses youth and avoid the type worn by the older women. This tradition is gone by the board. It keeps company with Davy Jones's Locker and a million traditions of the depths. The debutante of this gay and prosperous season wears a hat of a kind which looks well over her face. The rule is an excellent one to follow through life. It aids the old and the young, the pretty and the plain.

The stiff sailor shape, Gibsonian in its severity, is about the only kind that is not popular. All the hats that have cluttered fashion since the idea began of wearing formal coverings on the head have reappeared this season. They present a bewildering array, it is true, but not an unpleasant one. It is distinctly comfortable to find a wide limit to one's choice.

The tan is the most girlish shape, and it persists in fashion. It has ceased to hang over the back of the collar in the Latin Quarter way. It has plenty of fullness, which is disposed to give breadth across the forehead. For want there is a broad Egyptian design in some composition in an Egyptian blue. This blue is admirable for debutantes.

The high crowned hat that is usually difficult for the adult to wear goes well with the brilliant and unlined youthful face. It has a slight brim and a mass of flues swirling out from the side. The young wear it in black velvet without a touch of color.

The Persian turban brought into strong relief this winter by the success of "Mecca" and "Afghanistan," the latter costume by Paul Poiret, is the delight of the girl who has a dash of the adventure in her carriage. It should not be worn by the timid type. It is built in Oriental blue velvet and covered with a lattice work of small pearls and white crystals.

An evening frock of taffeta consists, so far as the skirt goes, of rows of up-standing ruffles—ruffles gathered and fastened to the foundation of the skirt along their lower edge. The stiffness of the silk keeps them standing upside down.



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Upper Left—White linen slip, fastened down back with bright red buttons. The edges are finished with red triangles, applied with button-hole stitch.

Second—Bright green wool jersey, with pleated skirt and straight bodice fastened with green buttons. The edges are outlined with bands of fur.

Upper right—Rainy day coat for a small boy. It is of tan tweed built man fashion, with notched revers, large pockets and tight belt. The hat is built of the tweed with a rain shedding brim.

Lower Left—Tan linen smock embroidered in red and blue conventional design and worn over a pair of bright blue trousers.

Second—Sweater of red wool with pleated skirt of blue serge, shown above. The bands are of blue Ankara at neck, hips and wrists.

Lower Right—Plaid top coat trimmed with narrow bands of shining black leather. The muffler and hat are built to match.

tinued to cut the hems of tiny frocks to the knee line, but there is a growing feeling that this modesty will soon cease. Children are now showing their knees. Some are showing the round white legs above them. No one seems to care how much material or how little material there is below the waist.

The piece of perversity that runs through the gamut of fashionable apparel is that youngsters should swathe their necks and uncover their legs. Their elder sisters do not swathe the necks. In this special abstinence they are consistent.

Stockings have long ago disappeared from the legs of the majority of youngsters; or at least they were in danger of doing this when someone handed children the golf stocking. The youngsters saw in it a chance to look quite sportsmanlike when they paraded the streets far from fields of activity, and to have anything but a nursery look is joy indeed.

Stand Cold Like Sailors.

It is a wonder that the reformers do not get after these fashions which permit a child to go about in icy cold weather with a minimum of clothing covering the lower half of the body. When women began to wear transparent blouses, thin stockings and low shoes on the street, there was a howl of protest that arose with the strength of a sirocco.

Doctors threatened pneumonia, to such women and argued that the future race was to consist of weaklings because women risked their health through vanity. But nothing happened. No woman has been any the worse for her incursions in clothes. She has merely learned to stand cold as a sailor does.

The same has been found true with children. Americans sneered at France because of her racial fear of a current of air, but they did not stop to think how the children were turned loose throughout the country with bare legs and arms. Finally America accepted this French custom. Stockings were abandoned, woolen clothes were thrown into the discard, hair was bobbed.

So the years have slipped by without any serious changes in fashions for children except the invidious shortening of the skirts. These have become grotesquely brief here and there.

Such grotesqueness established a short skirt for the conservatives as is the way of fashion and the most modest of mothers now permits her youngsters to wear slips that are well above the knees or breeches that are little more than loin cloths.

But there is a startling change arriving over the horizon for youngsters. It gives every promise of arresting attention. It is fostered by the desire of certain dressmakers to reinstate in children's clothes a pictorial effect. They think severity has gone far enough, and that there is no more delight to be squeezed out of funny little linen frocks with a bit of colored embroidery.

Wide Variety of Colorful Garb. These dressmakers have introduced a wide variety of colorful clothes that really signify something. They are imitations of old fashions and the children are delighted with them as they have

particular one is a resurrection from the neglected tomb of a buried era. Of course, the French have caused this resurrection. During the war they adopted dark and warm fabrics for children—not so much for protection, as they were reduced to absurd proportions, but as a method for reducing laundry work. The fashion remains. It has reached and influenced Americans.

Here Are Some of the Clothes.

None of us is so young as to forget the sudden change in the opinions of mothers concerning the advisability of providing wash garments for children in place of the worsted fabrics that had held since Puritan days. We consider the new decision final. This was the accepted fashion to world's end. So do we judge all mass decisions, suddenly waking up to find that they, too, are old fashioned. So it is that wash clothes which ruled the nursery are old fashioned this season. They are not even promised for the summer time. Silk and crepe de chine are in full power. Colors are preferred to white. Ornamentation is rampant. Elimination of material in length of skirt is the only elimination.

One cannot fail to put the question: What are women going to do if the nursery succeeds in this revolution? The older set has stolen prevailing juvenile

of black taffeta slips for yellow haired youngsters throw a pebble in a pond. The circles have rapidly widened.

Japanese silk is widely used for spring frocks. It is sometimes striped in Directorate fashion. Green and gold are colors used in one model. There is another gown in a small figured design on a dark background with an introduction of voile pleatings, red ribbon and green bows. Surely imagination can go no further. The child who wears it will feel like a May pole.

There are cordings and puffings and tuckings on this gown to keep them from getting back to the standard of simplicity that has prevailed. Net and Georgette are combined in some frocks. Serge and organdy are put together, especially in long waisted frocks with the serge serving as a pleated skirt. There are organdy slips dropped over colored silk pinafores, and scallops have dropped down from women's clothes to frequent usage at the edges of small frocks.

That is where scallops began in the nursery, and that is where they return to be bound with bright colors as of old. The short, serviceable skirts of blue serge attached to muslin bodices are completed by overblouses of wash fabric with the same kind of scalloped hem that women have put on the lower edge of evening frocks during the winter.

Overblouses Are Painful.

These overblouses are fanciful and diverse. In them there is a return to table cloth cotton in red and white or yellow and white checks, the kind that was so difficult to get during the war even in France where it had served as table covering for centuries. Possibly this very demand for it, and its scarcity, placed the minds of designers on it.

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